

Political Context and the Development of Party Identification in Adolescence

Jennifer Wolak
Department of Political Science
University of Colorado at Boulder
136 Ketchum, 333 UCB
Boulder, Colorado 80309-0333
wolakj@colorado.edu

Abstract

What are the roots of party identification? Credit (or blame) often falls to parents, who have been shown to play a central role in development of partisan identification in adolescence. Usually in these models of parental transmission of partisanship, children are seen as unquestioning recipients of partisan messages. I consider whether this is so, investigating whether differences in young people's levels of political interest, attention, and engagement also direct the development of partisan identity. Second, I consider the effects of factors beyond the household in shaping partisanship – specifically the effects of differences in state level political contexts during a midterm campaign season. I find that both the political personality of adolescents and their wider political environment contribute to the development of adolescent partisanship, beyond the contributions of parental influence.

I thank Michael McDevitt for generously sharing survey data from the Colors of Socialization study. I also thank Jennifer Fitzgerald and Elaine Fischer for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Political Context and the Development of Party Identification in Adolescence

Partisanship is a powerful influence on people's perceptions of politics – informing candidate choice, serving as a decision heuristic, and biasing how new political information is interpreted (Campbell et al. 1960; Lodge and Hamill 1986; Rahn 1993; Taber and Lodge 2006). The centrality of partisanship to electoral politics has lead many to wonder about the roots of partisan preferences – where they come from and how they develop. According to *The American Voter* (Campbell et al. 1960), the origins of partisanship can be found in childhood and within the household, where parents play an important role in the development of their children's partisan identities. Even decades later, surveys confirm the importance of parents in shaping the partisan orientations of their offspring. As noted in *The American Voter Revisited* (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), when parents share the same party affiliation, they pass it to their children about 75% of the time. And even as recent studies attribute parental influence to genetic causes, partisanship still emerges as primarily a socialized belief – one learned from parents and childhood experiences (Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005).

The relationship between the partisanship of parents and children is strong – stronger than parental influence on other political beliefs of offspring, such as policy preferences or trust (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2001). Even so, parental transmission remains imperfect. Not all children mirror their parents' partisanship, and arguably factors outside of the household can direct the trajectory of adolescents' partisan development. In this paper, I consider the mechanisms by which adolescents adopt or fail to adopt partisan identities. In previous research, scholars have investigated how family characteristics or political eras condition the adoption of partisan identity (e.g. Beck and Jennings 1991; Jennings and Niemi 1974; Luskin, McIver, and Carmines 1989). I elaborate on this research by considering two other kinds of influences on youth partisanship – contextual factors beyond the family and the political dispositions of adolescents. Why do young people change their party identification

over the course of a campaign? To what degree is this a reflection of the distinctive political environment one finds himself in, and to what degree do changes in partisan identity reflect a young person's orientation toward politics and desire to engage in political matters?

There are a number of reasons to study the partisan preferences of adolescents. One is to better understand the roots of a preference so central to politics. Partisanship holds a distinctive place among the array of attitudes and dispositions people hold about politics. While opinions about policy issues are often marked by instability and variability, one's party identification tends to be much more stable over time (Converse and Markus 1979). While some fail to meaningfully identify with an ideology, most are willing and able to place themselves along a partisan spectrum. And partisanship remains one of the best predictors of how people evaluate electoral politics – both a half century ago and today. In 1952, 90% of strong partisans voted for their party in the presidential race, and nearly 75% of weak partisans did the same (Campbell et al. 1960). Over fifty years later, the effects of partisanship on presidential vote choice remain robust. In 2004, 97% of strong partisans voted for the candidate from their political party, as did about 88% of weak partisans (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008).

Given that partisanship tends to become more stable over one's lifetime (Jennings and Markus 1984; Sears and Funk 1999), adolescence marks a time in life where partisan preferences are particularly malleable. The development of partisanship in adolescence thus has lifelong influence on how people see the political world. In addition, the malleability of youth preferences also means that younger voters may disproportionately drive changes in macro level sentiment (Franklin 2004; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). Thus how young people adapt their attitudes and behaviors in light of contemporary events can be consequential in explaining macro level partisan dynamics (Erikson, MacKuen, Stimson 2002).

The adoption of partisanship also affects how adolescents relate to the political world in the short term and the long term. Given that young people are less likely to turnout for

elections, it is useful to know how adolescents develop their early orientations toward politics. Partisan identities are connected to other civic attitudes – where identifying with a political party is correlated with political knowledge and participation in political discussion among high school students (Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht 2003). Young people who do not establish early identification with a political party have more instability in political preferences over their lifetime (Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2001).

I begin by reviewing what prior research tells us about the roots of partisanship in adolescence. I then develop why political geography should shape partisan development, and elaborate on why an adolescent's political traits and dispositions could influence the adoption of a partisan identity. Next, I examine the effects of political and social environments for partisan change among high school seniors across the course of a midterm election season. I consider how much change takes place over the campaign season, and then model partisan change as a function of the campaign context, local social environments, and student dispositions.

The Roots of Partisan Preferences

In thinking about how political orientations develop in children, attention has focused on those influences that are closest to home. Among the various socializing influences that young people encounter, parents are usually seen as the most powerful influence on adolescent partisanship (Jennings and Niemi 1974, 1981). Family environments shape partisan identifications through both time and trust. People spend a good bit of time with family members, creating opportunities for political messages to be distilled. And while people may be skeptical about political accounts from the media or politicians, family members are often trusted and respected sources when conveying political information (Zuckerman, Dasovic, and Fitzgerald 2007). Peers turn out to be less influential on shaping the partisanship of young people, arguably because politics is less important among peer groups, and because

adolescents may not know the political preferences of their peers (Tedin 1980). And while school environments can influence students' civic dispositions (Campbell 2007; Zukin et al. 2006), teachers do not direct the development of partisan identification (Jennings and Niemi 1974).

Beyond one's immediate social context, the views of adolescents are also affected by the events of the day, and the nature of times and the era in which one grows up. Growing up in politically contentious times shapes one's later political trajectory (Jennings 2002). Some political eras are more conducive to the parental transmission of partisanship than others, based on the nature of partisan cues provided by the political environment (Carmines, McIver, and Stimson 1987). Political events like campaigns also have the ability to direct the development of partisan identities. Sears and Valentino (1997) show that over the course of a presidential campaign, young people increased their levels of partisan affect and knowledge, and their levels of partisan strength increased to levels nearly as high as seen in a sample of adults. Events like Watergate and the September 11 terrorist attacks also can influence the development of political attitudes among young people (Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht 2003; Hawkins, Pingrey, and Roberts 1975).

These studies show the potential for influences outside the home to direct the development of partisanship among adolescents. Their focus is on variations across time. However, political circumstances vary not only across eras, but also across space. Some grow up in politically homogeneous areas, while others face greater political diversity. Regions vary in the number and kind of political messages as well as the demographic diversity that is present. States have distinct partisan cultures that demographics alone cannot explain (Erikson, McIver, and Wright 1987). Arguably these kinds of differences in social and political environments will shape how young people relate to political parties. However, less is known about the consequences of geography in the socialization process. In recent years, researchers have begun to pay more attention to the effects of larger social environments for the adoption

of civic attitudes like volunteerism and political knowledge. Gimpel, Lay, and Schuknecht (2003) find that political diversity and partisan competition are correlated with greater political knowledge and efficacy. Political heterogeneity also promotes tolerance and political participation, while community homogeneity tends to be more conducive to civic engagement and social capital (Campbell 2006). Growing up in areas with greater local electoral competition also correlates with voter turnout later in life (Pancheco 2008).

The Effects of the Political Environment

How do partisan identities develop during adolescence? While parents play a central role in shaping the partisan socialization of youth, knowledge of parental partisanship is an imperfect predictor of the partisanship of adolescents (Jennings and Niemi 1974). One reason why adolescents develop or fail to develop a particular partisan identity relates to their level of exposure to political information. I argue that the greater the intensity of political signals from one's surroundings, the greater the chance of partisan variability. We know from prior research that such a relationship holds true within the family environment – where the success of parental transmission of partisanship depends in part on the presence or absence of clear partisan cues. When parents are politically active and often talk about politics in the home, parental partisanship is more likely to be transferred to the child (Beck and Jennings 1991; Campbell et al. 1960; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2001). When parents fail to share the same partisanship, likelihood of transmission of partisan identification to children declines (Jennings and Niemi 1974).

I investigate whether such a relationship holds true outside of the household, and the consequences of the quantity of political information available in one's social context and the broader political environment. If politicized families are better able to shape the partisanship of offspring than less politically active families, the same should hold for other political contexts. Schools that provide more civic education and encourage political discussion provide

avenues to learn about contemporary politics and current events. When people fall into peer groups of friends who like to chat about campaigns and politics, they should be more likely to encounter the kinds of information that direct the development of partisan identities. Young people who pay more attention to the news will be exposed to more political arguments and policy positions. And living in a state with competitive campaigns being waged also creates opportunities to encounter new partisan claims – through bumper stickers, news coverage, and television advertising. When people are sheltered from current events in apolitical homes in states with low intensity campaigns, the opportunities to encounter the kinds of information that could induce partisan change are scarce.¹

Apart from the quantity of political messages one is exposed to, individuals also vary in their desire and willingness to engage with this information. There is a tendency in studies of political socialization to see adolescents as passive recipients of political messages. But it is likely that some children better receive the subtle political lessons that parents provide than others. Indeed, recent research highlights that children are often active participants in shaping the political environment at home – where children can serve as instigators of political involvement, inspiring parents to become more politically engaged (McDevitt and Chaffee 2002).

I argue that partisan development over the course of a campaign season rests in part on one's political personality. Some are more interested in politics, and more likely to pursue available political information. People also vary in their need for cognition, and their desire to engage with political puzzles. Others vary in their desire or tolerance of conflict. Despite a popular expectation of rebellion as a traditional characteristic of adolescence, evidence of this

¹ It is also possible that the socializing effects of the political context are a product of not just the number of political messages, but also their kind. It may be that the conflict of competing partisan messages generates instable partisanship among young people. We know from earlier research that the conflict between issue preferences and partisan identity can influence whether young people adopt a particular partisan identity or not (Jennings and Niemi 1974; Luskin, McIver, and Carmines 1989; Niemi and Jennings 1991). I hope to explore the effects of diverse environments on partisan socialization in future research

in the inheritance of political attitudes has generally been scant (Jennings and Niemi 1968). But apart from rebellion for rebellion's sake, young people likely vary in their desire and willingness to challenge their parents and other political information they encounter. Some are conflict avoidant, wishing to avoid contentious political discussion. Others are conflict-seeking, willing to challenge parents about matters like candidate preferences and public policy matters. These dispositions will influence how adolescents approach politics, in a way potentially consequential for the development of partisan identity. As such, I consider how the attributes of adolescents themselves relate to partisan development.

Data

To explore these effects of information environments on adolescent partisan identification, I rely on a panel survey of high-school seniors conducted in 2006. The first wave of the survey was conducted in late summer of 2006, generally before the start of classes. The second wave took place in November and December 2006, after the midterm elections. Student survey respondents were drawn from ten states with state level races in 2006. One state had a Senate race (Washington), three states had a gubernatorial race (Arkansas, Colorado, and Iowa), and six states had gubernatorial and senatorial races on the ballot (California, Florida, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island).² Ninety-five students were randomly selected from each state, leading to an overall sample of 950 in the first wave. Of these participants, 570 also completed the second wave of the survey.³

² For sake of comparison, in the 2006 American National Election Study, 56% of the sample resided in states with a gubernatorial and Senate race, 19% saw only a gubernatorial contest, 22% saw only a Senate race, and 3% lived in a state with no major state level contest.

³ Considering the composition of the sample across the two waves, the size of each state sample in the second wave remains consistent across states. Also, there were no significant differences in prior partisanship among those who complete only the pre-election survey versus those who complete both waves.

As others have shown (Sears and Valentino 1997), campaigns have the ability to shape the partisan attitudes of young people.⁴ Yet it is less clear whether these effects are unique to presidential campaigns, the races that draw the greatest attention and greatest participation from voters. It may also be that the presence of a campaign matters more than its content or intensity. Exploring differences in campaign environments across states during a midterm election season thus allows for a finer-grained test of the extent of campaign influence in partisan socialization.

To assess levels of partisan identification, respondents were asked, “Which of the following best represents your beliefs in terms of a political party or a political stance? Green Party, Libertarian, Democrat, Republican, some other political stance, or would you say that you are not really political?” In the first wave of the survey, 24% identified as Democrats, 23% identified as Republicans, 16% identified with another party or stance, and 37% replied that they were not political. So among these high school seniors, less than half identified with one of the two major parties. Given the unique question wording, it is difficult to know how this would compare to an adult sample. However, the level of minor party identification among adolescents appears high, and major party affiliation appears a bit low. This may be a reflection of an undeveloped sense of partisanship, or perhaps a reflection of openness to different party alternatives as a young person explores which party best suits their interests.

Next, I consider how partisan identification differed after the midterm elections. Pre-election partisanship and post-election identification are summarized in Table 1. Interestingly, the overall level of partisan identification in the sample did not increase after the election. In the pre-election wave, 63% identified with any party. In the post-election wave, the same share named a partisan affiliation. Thus midterm campaigns did not systematically boost partisan identification across all respondents and all states.

⁴ We also see instable partisanship among an adult sample across the course of a presidential campaign (Brody and Rothenberg 1988; Allsop and Weisberg 1988).

However, there is a good bit of individual variation in partisan identification within the sample. Considering changes in party identification between the pre-election survey and the post-election survey, 64% maintained the same identification across both waves. Among the 36% changing identification, one third shifted from holding a partisan identification to selecting none and the remaining two-thirds switched party identification to one they did not hold at the beginning of the election. In other words, about a third of the sample changed their identification over the course of the campaign season, and these changes tended to be toward identifying with a different party rather than choosing to affiliate with no party. Considering who was most likely to shift partisanship, those who had initially identified with a minor party were the most likely to change, where only a third maintained the same identification. For Democrats and Republicans, close to three quarters maintained the same partisanship across survey waves.

What about the strength of partisan preferences among those who identified with a party? Considering the subsample that maintained a consistent identification with a specific party across both panel waves (40% of the sample), no clear pattern of change in partisan strength emerged over the course of the campaign. On a ten point scale of strength of party identification, 30% developed a stronger identification with their party over the course of the campaign, 37% stated a weaker identification in the post-election survey, and 33% maintained the same strength of identification across both surveys.

Overall, the partisanship of adolescents over the course of a midterm election season is neither perfectly stable nor perfectly volatile. It is not the case that this sample of high school seniors became uniformly more partisan in identification and strength of identification as a consequence of the gubernatorial and senatorial races being waged in their states. But nor is it the case that these students remain constant in the face of these campaign environments – many maintained a consistent partisan identification across the campaign, but a good share changed affiliations over these months.

Explaining changes in youth partisanship across campaign seasons

Next, I explore why some maintain the same partisanship, while others change – and for those who change, why they choose to identify with another party or become apolitical. Is partisan change largely idiosyncratic among these high school seniors, or can changes in identification be traced to features of the political environment? To model the dynamics of partisan identification among high school seniors across a campaign season, I rely on two measures. The first is a dummy variable considering stability versus change – where those who answer the partisan identification questions differently in the pre-election and the post-election survey are coded 1, and the rest are coded 0. In a second measure, I consider whether the change over the course of the campaign was to change affiliation or to move from identifying with a party in the first wave to selecting no party in the second wave.⁵

Among state level factors, I consider the effects of state-level campaign intensity. I include measures of candidate spending in Senate and gubernatorial races. To capture party activity beyond candidate campaign efforts, I also include a measure of national party transfers to the states (Holbrook and McClurg 2005). Each is transformed to a measure comparable by states by taking the natural log of spending divided by state voting age population. I expect that greater state campaign intensity will be correlated with greater partisan change, particularly in the direction of developing a partisan identity.

I also consider exposure to politics in the family, in school, in religious venues, and from the media. Because levels of interpersonal discussion have been identified as particularly important in partisan socialization in prior studies (McDevitt 2006; Valentino and Sears 1998), I use measures of political talk to assess the quantity of political information

⁵ The choice of these measures is both empirical and theoretical. In practical terms, a relatively small number of respondents are changing from one particular cell to other – combining into these categories boosts sample size in each. Theoretically, such an approach is consistent with other research that argues that partisan switching is uncommon, where partisan change is less about choosing between Party A and Party B, and more about the decision to affiliate with one party or no party at all (Carmines, McIver, and Stimson 1987; Sears and Funk 1999; Zuckerman, Dasović, and Fitzgerald 2007).

shared in different social milieus. In the case of family discussion and conversations with friends, I rely on questions that ask about how often one discussed politics with family and friends. For political talk in schools and churches, I rely on items that ask respondents to report how much political conversation took place in each. To measure exposure to the news media, I use a question about levels of attention to political news. Full question wordings for all items can be found in the Appendix. I expect that greater political conversation will be affiliated with greater likelihood of partisan change across panel waves.

I also consider the consequences of adolescents' propensity to seek or avoid political information. One's level of political interest is included, as well as a measure of how much one cognitively engages with stories encountered in the news. Respondents are also asked a set of questions about how frequently they provoke their parents with political views, combined as a measuring of conflict seeking. As a measure of conflict avoidance, I include a measure of whether one dislikes discussions about politics. I expect interest and cognitive engagement to be positively related to partisan change, particularly in the direction of gaining a partisan identification. In the case of conflict avoidance, I expect that those who dislike conflict to be more likely to shift partisanship over the course of the campaign, but in the direction of becoming less political and partisan.

Given that the models include both state level and individual level explanations for partisan change, I use a multilevel modeling strategy. To model change in partisanship across panel waves, I use a multilevel logit model. To distinguish whether one changes partisanship or becomes less political across panel waves, I use a multilevel multinomial logit model. Measures of campaign intensity, political talk, and individual dispositions are included as discussed above. For measures of political talk, I include both the baseline level as well as change in the level of conversation (when available) to see whether the effects are primarily

due to the nature of the social environment or changes in political talk across the waves of the survey.⁶ Results are shown in Table 2.

Considering first the effects of campaign intensity, neither levels of gubernatorial campaign spending nor senatorial spending are significantly related to the likelihood of partisan change in the multilevel logit model. In the multinomial logit model, however, Senate campaign spending is negatively associated with the probability of becoming less political over the course of the campaign season. Gubernatorial campaign spending is also negatively related to the probability of becoming less political. While campaign spending does not increase the likelihood of switching partisan affiliation over the campaign among these high school seniors, greater campaign intensity appears to inhibit the chances of becoming less political. Party activity, as assessed with the national party transfers measure, is significantly related to a greater likelihood of partisan change across the campaign season, and surprisingly positively associated with the probability of becoming less political after the campaign. Overall, while campaign environments do not exert an overwhelming influence on partisan socialization, they do have modest influence in promoting partisan identification among youth.

To what degree do adolescents vary in their likelihood to change partisanship across the campaign? I find that partisan change depends in part on adolescents' level of political interest and engagement with the news. Those with greater interest in politics are more likely to hold stable partisanship across the course of the campaign. In the multilevel multinomial logit model, political interest is negatively associated with both moving from a partisan identity to none, and moving to a different partisan identity. While interest in politics decreases the likelihood of partisan change, cognitive engagement with political news is

⁶ Arguably, levels of political talk might also vary depending on state campaign intensity. However, levels of campaign spending in this sample fail to predict the amount of political conversation in schools, families, peer groups, and churches, with one exception. Levels of Senate spending are significantly related with higher reports of political conversations in schools. Considering the correlations between the level-2 spending measures and other level-1 variables, no correlation is greater than 0.1. On the whole, it does not appear that level of political talk is a reflection of the local intensity of campaigns.

positively associated with partisan change. Those who like figuring out political news are more likely to demonstrate volatility in their identification. It may be that political interest operates here in the manner of motivated reasoning (Taber and Lodge 2006), where these adolescents have already started to develop habits of selective interpretation – such that their news seeking tends to favor confirmatory evidence. But for those who have a disposition to engage in more effortful processing, like those of higher cognitive engagement with the news, political attentiveness comes with greater openness to both sides.

Not all enjoy political conflict, and I find that those who do not are less likely to change their partisanship over the course of the campaign. In particular, in the multinomial logit model, conflict avoidance is negatively associated with changing partisan identification across the campaign. In addition to liking or disliking political conflict, adolescents also vary in their desire to challenge and provoke their parents about current events. Those who do are slightly more likely to change partisan identities over the campaign, but the effect is only weakly significant ($p < 0.09$) and only in the multilevel logit model. Students' feelings about political conflict and disagreement arguably shape how they approach the political environment, in ways that are consequential for the adoption of partisan identification.

Finally, I consider the effects of local political context for the development of adolescent party identification during a midterm campaign season. First, I find that students' levels of media attention prior to the campaign are positively associated with changing partisan identities over the course of the campaign, while increases in attention across these months is negatively associated with disaffiliation with a party over the campaign. Levels of attention to the news are connected to the volatility of youth partisanship. Turning next to the influence of home environments, higher levels of political discussion with parents also decrease the likelihood of becoming less political across the duration of the campaign. Increasing levels of political talk with parents over the course of the campaign is positively associated with change in one's partisan identity. This second result is a bit surprising – as parents are usually seen

as agents of reinforcement. However, if this change in political talk is initiated not by parents, but by the child (McDevitt 2006), this volatility may reflect an adolescent's increasing awareness and consideration of the political sphere.

Political conversations with peers have no effect on partisan change among adolescents – baseline levels of talk have no significant relationship, nor do changes in the level of talk across the campaign. The findings of limited peer influence on youth partisanship in studies from the 1960s (Jennings and Niemi 1974) appear to hold today as well. Greater political conversations in school, however, do promote partisan change, particularly in the direction of gaining a new partisan identity during the course of the campaign. Over the years, schools have invested more in civic education through programs like Kids Voting, and politicized school environments like these appear consequential for the development of adolescent partisanship. Finally, levels of political talk in one's church or synagogue tends not to have an effect on partisan change over the campaign, though greater talk has a weak negative effect on the probability of becoming nonpolitical during the campaign.

Discussion

More work needs to be done on investigating the individual and contextual roots of partisanship for adolescents. In future research, I plan to consider the effects of not only the amount of political information, but also the kind. Arguably, the effects of political predispositions like conflict avoidance matter not only directly, but also in conjunction with the nature of the political environment. Investigating the moderating effects of individual traits on the effects of state political contexts will be an important next step.

Several interesting findings emerge from this preliminary study. First, I provide additional evidence that campaigns are socializing events for young people. As Sears and Valentino (1997) note, socialization is not necessarily steady and incremental, but comes in fits and starts. Midterm elections may also serve as one of these kinds of socializing events.

Midterm races and state level election contests tend not to draw as much public attention, interest, and participation as a presidential race – and overall, the general patterns of partisan change observed here suggests that the level of transformation of young people’s attitudes is not as great as has been observed in presidential election seasons (Sears and Valentino 1997). Nonetheless, these state races have some influence on the partisan development of young people – in particular, decreasing the likelihood of becoming less political during the course of the campaign.

Others have investigated the degree of partisan variability among adult samples during campaign seasons (Allsop and Weisberg 1988; Brody and Rothenberg 1988; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002). I find evidence of both stability and change among this sample of high-school seniors. About 40% maintain their partisanship across the campaign, about 25% maintain their apolitical status across the campaign, but for the remainder, partisan identification shifts in some way across these few months. These changes are not simply idiosyncratic – or merely whims for young people who have not yet thought about politics in a concrete way. Undoubtedly, some of this observed instability in partisanship is based on inexperience or uncertainty. But some of this change is substantive, such that factors like political personality and social context help explain why young people change their identification over the course of a midterm election.

Studies of political socialization sometimes suggest that children have little role in choosing their own partisanship, as their partisan identity is seen the product of accepting parental partisanship or a reflection of the nature of a political era. These results suggest that more attention should be paid to young people as actors in their own political socialization. Given the importance of partisanship to electoral politics and its centrality to so many political evaluations, it is normatively reassuring to see partisanship as something not just inherited, but developed with feedback and input from the child during adolescence. Certainly, others have raised the idea that youth choices influence the development of partisanship (e.g. Achen

2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), but this study provides new evidence of how this might occur, as individuals' propensity for partisan change rests in part on political personality. Adolescents are not merely receipts of partisan lessons from parents, but active participants in their political socialization, responding to the character of the political environment they inhabit.

Appendix – Question Wordings

Frequency of political talk with parents (pre-election and post-election)

“How often do you talk about politics with your parents?”

1-Never, 2, 3, 4, 5-Frequently

Frequency of political talk with friends (pre-election and post-election)

“How often do you talk about politics with friends?”

1-Never, 2, 3, 4, 5-Frequently

Frequency of political talk in school (post-election)

“How often was the election campaign discussed in your classes?”

1-Never, 2, 3, 4, 5-Frequently

Frequency of political talk in religious groups (post-election)

“How often is politics discusses in your church, synagogue, or temple?”

1-Never, 2, 3, 4, 5-Often

Attention to politics (pre-election and post-election)

“How much attention do you pay to news about politics?”

1-None, 2, 3, 4, 5-A great deal

Political interest (pre-election)

“In general, how much interest do you have in politics?”

1-None, 2, 3, 4, 5-A great deal

Cognitive engagement with political news (pre-election)

“When I hear news about politics, I try to figure out what is really going on.”

Not like me, Somewhat like me, A lot like me

Conflict avoidance

“Discussions about politics sometimes make me feel uncomfortable.”

Not like me, Somewhat like me, A lot like me

Tendency to challenge parents (pre-election and post-election)

“How often do you express a political opinion to challenge a parent?”

“How often do you express an opinion to provoke some response from parents?”

“How often do you express an opinion to see if it might upset your parents?”

1-Never, 2, 3, 4, 5-Frequently

Table 1: Partisan identification, Pre-election versus Post-election

		<i>Partisanship, Pre-election</i>				
		Democrat	Republican	Other party	Not political	Total
<i>Partisanship, Post-election</i>	Democrat	72%	6%	35%	14%	29%
	Republican	7%	74%	9%	9%	24%
	Other party	5%	1%	33%	7%	10%
	Not political	16%	18%	23%	70%	37%
n		135	137	94	203	569

Table 2: Change in Partisanship, Pre-election to Post-election

	Any change in partisanship	Direction of change in partisanship	
		<i>No party</i>	<i>Different party</i>
National party transfers to states	1.453* (0.541)	3.267* (0.886)	0.648 (0.620)
Senatorial campaign spending	-0.144 (0.126)	-0.448* (0.185)	-0.012 (0.149)
Gubernatorial campaign spending	0.007 (0.195)	-0.516+ (0.312)	0.197 (0.226)
Political interest	-1.103* (0.468)	-1.213+ (0.717)	-1.055* (0.538)
Cognitive engagement with political news	0.798* (0.299)	1.230* (0.450)	0.579+ (0.348)
Conflict avoidance	-0.581* (0.278)	-0.622 (0.412)	-0.601+ (0.321)
Tendency to challenge parents, pre-election	0.797+ (0.468)	0.905 (0.747)	0.860 (0.529)
Δ in tendency to challenge parents	0.676 (0.454)	0.822 (0.715)	0.727 (0.517)
Attention to politics, pre-election	1.163+ (0.621)	0.562 (0.940)	1.484* (0.717)
Δ in attention to politics	-0.538 (0.481)	-1.937* (0.755)	0.256 (0.566)
Frequency of political talk with parents, pre-election	-0.144 (0.506)	-2.301* (0.852)	0.660 (0.582)
Δ in frequency of political talk with parents	0.638 (0.450)	-1.366+ (0.751)	1.438* (0.518)
Frequency of political talk with friends, pre-election	-0.405 (0.442)	-1.065 (0.710)	-0.288 (0.505)
Δ in frequency of political talk with friends	-0.461 (0.398)	-0.940 (0.626)	-0.276 (0.457)
Frequency of political talk in school, post-election	0.594* (0.293)	0.355 (0.445)	0.715* (0.343)
Frequency of political talk in church, post-election	-0.473 (0.372)	-1.085+ (0.627)	-0.145 (0.419)
Constant	-1.329* (0.465)	-0.855 (0.711)	-2.514* (0.548)
N	570	569	

First column, multilevel logit estimates. Other columns, multilevel multinomial logit estimates. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.05 + p<0.10, two-tailed test.

References

- Achen, Christopher. 2002. "Parental Socialization and Rational Party Identification." *Political Behavior* 24: 151-170.
- Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99:153-167.
- Allsop, Dee, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 1988. "Measuring Change in Party Identification in an Election Campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(4):996-1017.
- Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations." *The Journal of Politics* 53(3):742-763.
- Brody, Richard A., and Lawrence S. Rothenberg. 1988. "The Instability of Partisanship: An Analysis of the 1980 Presidential Election." *British Journal of Political Science* 18: 445-465.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.
- Campbell, David E. 2006. *Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Campbell, David E. 2007. "Sticking Together: Classroom Diversity and Civic Education." *American Politics Research* 35(1): 57-78.
- Carmines, Edward G., John P. McIver, and James A. Stimson. 1987. "Unrealized Partisanship: A Theory of Dealignment." *Journal of Politics* 49(2): 376-400.
- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Erikson, Robert S., John P. McIver, and Gerald C. Wright, Jr. 1987. "State Political Culture and Public Opinion." *American Political Science Review* 81(3):797-813.
- Franklin, Mark N. 2004. *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Gimpel, James G., J. Celeste Lay, Jason E. Schuknecht. 2003. *Cultivating Democracy: Civic Environments and Political Socialization in America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Green, Donald Philip, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identity of Voters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hawkins, Robert Parker, Suzanne Pingree, and Donald F. Roberts. 1975. "Watergate and Political Socialization: The Inescapable Event." *American Politics Quarterly* 3:406-422.

- Holbrook, Thomas M., and Scott D. McClurg. 2005. "The Mobilization of Core Supporters: Campaigns, Turnout, and Electoral Composition in United States Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 689-703.
- Jennings, M. Kent. 2002. "Generation Units and the Student Protest Movement in the United States: An Intra- and Intergenerational Analysis." *Political Psychology* 23(2):303-324
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Gregory B. Markus. 1984. "Partisan Orientation Over the Long Haul: Results from the Three Wave Political Socialization Study." *American Political Science Review* 78: 1000-1018.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review*. 62:169-184.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1974. *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G. Niemi. 1981. *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and their Parents*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2001. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." Institute of Governmental Studies.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lodge, Milton, and Ruth Hamill. 1986. "A Partisan Schema for Political Information Processing." *American Political Science Review* 80:505-519.
- McDevitt, Michael. 2006. "The Partisan Child: Developmental Provocation as a Model of Political Socialization." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18:67-88.
- McDevitt, Michael, and Steven H. Chaffee. 2002. "From Top-Down to Trickle-up Influence: Revisiting Assumptions about the Family in Political Socialization." *Political Communication* 19:281-301.
- Luskin, Robert C., John P. McIver, and Edward G. Carmines. 1989. "Issues and the Transmission of Partisanship." *American Journal of Political Science* 33(2): 440-458.
- Niemi, Richard G., and M. Kent Jennings. 1991. "Issues and Inheritance in the Formation of Party Identification." *American Journal of Political Science* 35:970-988.
- Pacheco, Julianna Sandell. 2008. "Political Socialization in Context: The Effect of Political Competition on Youth Voter Turnout." *Political Behavior*
- Rahn, Wendy M. 1993. "The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates." *American Journal of Political Science* 37:472-496.
- Sears, David O., and Carolyn L. Funk. 1999. "Evidence of the Long-Term Persistence of Adults' Political Predispositions." *The Journal of Politics* 61(1):1-28.

- Sears, David O., and Nicholas A. Valentino. 1997. "Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Preadult Socialization." *American Political Science Review* 91: 45-65.
- Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3):755-769.
- Tedin, Kent L. 1980. "Assessing Peer and Parent Influence on Adolescent Political Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 24(1):136-154.
- Zuckerman, Alan S., Josip Dasović, and Jennifer Fitzgerald. 2007. *Partisan Families: The Social Logic of Bounded Partisanship in Germany and Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly W. Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini. 2006. *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. New York: Oxford University Press.